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Oral history interview with Joyce Anderson, 2002 September 18-19

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Transcript

Interview

Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project For Craft and Decorative Arts in America

Interview with Joyce Anderson
Conducted by Donna Gold
At the Artist's home in Morristown, New Jersey
September 17 and 18, 2002

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Joyce Anderson on September 17 and 18, 2002. The interview took place in Morristown, New Jersey, and was conducted by Donna Gold for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Joyce Anderson and Donna Gold have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

This is one of three interviews with Joyce and Edgar Anderson. The interviews with Edgar Anderson and Joyce and Edgar Anderson together will be available at a later date.

MS. DONNA GOLD: This is Donna Gold interviewing Joyce Anderson at her home in Harding Township on September 17, 2002. And this is disc one.

I'm going to ask you some general questions and then probably go back and ask you about your childhood. But I was very fascinated by the fact that you trained in public affairs and economics and you were looking to have a career in economics. What is it that brought you to change? And was it a hard choice?

MS. JOYCE ANDERSON: I don't know if it was a hard choice. I was tending toward the field of economics as I became a senior in college, and then in graduate school I could pick the courses that I had been becoming interested in. And I was quite interested in what I was doing. I was getting into labor-management symposium, I was getting into the theory of monopolistic competition and subjects that were becoming interesting, so I thought that was the direction my life was going to go.

Because of the changes that happened when we were married, the fact that we lived in Brooklyn and then we lived in Chicago, I had to find work quickly and for a short period of time, and the work I found was not of much interest. I worked for a trade magazine.

And eventually I finally found a job that I thought I was going to love, which was in economic research, and it turned out to be a very problematical job. The research people were fine, but the man who ran the place didn't think women were professionals, and he thought I was going to become a sort of secretary. So that didn't work, so I had to go back and reconsider what I was going to do.

And while I was reconsidering, my husband started making furniture, and he needed another hand, and I started helping. And pretty soon I decided that the life he was planning was going to be a lot more interesting than the life I thought I was planning. High on my list has always been I don't want to be bored, and I think I decided that the life he was going to live was the life where I wasn't going to be bored. And that very much fits in with me.

MS. GOLD: So you haven't been bored. But you weren't originally bored with economics.

MS. ANDERSON: I wasn't bored when I was in school. And as I was interviewing for various jobs, there were some wonderful ones that were possibilities.

MS. GOLD: Where were you at school?

MS. ANDERSON: Dickinson College [Carlisle, Pennsylvania] and New York University.

I was offered one with City Center, I think, to work on the publications. It was either that or Carnegie Hall; I forget which. And I almost went to work for Nelson Rockefeller as a group of three who were doing economic research for his investments in South America. And I got as far as the semi-finals, but I didn't get to the finals. That, I thought, would be interesting. I had a lot of Spanish and I had written papers on economic affairs in South

America. And I had another offer for a federal trade -- federal bank, I think, system, work training. And they all seemed quite possible, but then I decided the economic research outfit was the best one. So, having made a bad mistake, I couldn't go back to the other ones.

MS. GOLD: So tell me about your childhood. When were you born?

MS. ANDERSON: I was born November 24, 1923, and grew up in West Orange, New Jersey, the same place as my husband grew up. And my family was middle class and comfortable. My father was a public school administrator who had started as a teacher and then became a principal and then an administrator. It was very important to him that I be a good student, so he was always encouraging me to study well and helped me with any problems I might have studying. And they encouraged me to take piano lessons and singing lessons. And I was very active in school, joining all kinds of groups and sports. I had a good bringing-up.

MS. GOLD: Did you have other siblings?

MS. ANDERSON: Pardon?

MS. GOLD: Did you have brothers or sisters?

MS. ANDERSON: I had a brother. I have a brother.

MS. GOLD: And did you have an interest in wood or the outside world?

MS. ANDERSON: My family did not have an interest in theater or any of those kinds of things. My only introduction to building anything was the fact that my father liked to add on to our summer place, so he would put a deck on the back, and pretty soon he would put a deck on the deck, and he put stairs going up to a loft. And since I liked working with my father, I learned what a hammer was for, what nails were for.

MS. GOLD: So you did hang out with him and work with him?

MS. ANDERSON: I joined him. We also would re-upholster the sofa, the couch in the living room, and I would be his helper or his sewer or whatever. So we did those tasks together. It wasn't anything I initiated, but because he did it, I helped him and learned how to do what he was doing.

MS. GOLD: And it was understood that you would go to college?

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, yes. College was very much part of what I was going to do.

MS. GOLD: And did you have games of any kind? I mean did you go out into the woods or out in the backyard or make things?

MS. ANDERSON: I don't remember making things. We played games. We played croquet, we played badminton. We were always, my brother and I, were batting balls around and active that way, but I don't really remember making things. And even though there were some painters in my mother's family and there were their paintings on our walls and they had good friends who painted well, they were just paintings on the wall and I never thought anything about it.

MS. GOLD: So, how did you and Edgar meet?

MS. ANDERSON: We dated each other in high school quite a bit. We were good friends. And then when we left for college and he left for the Army, we mostly lost track of each other, and re-met each other after the war when he came back from overseas.

MS. GOLD: And during the war, you were in college?

MS. ANDERSON: The war started my freshman year, and it changed our whole college education very considerably. There were, like, four males to every female when I was a freshman. By the time I was a senior, there were about two males left in the whole class. And the four years were just total differences that happened because of the war being on. Eventually the cadets were stationed at the college and some of them took classes with us. The whole thing changed a great deal.

And after, I guess, after I graduated, the war was ending and all the males were coming back, and it was my patriotic duty to spend their 45-day leaves with them and play tennis or go to the movies and go swimming or whatever it was.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: And my husband-to-be was one of them.

MS. GOLD: So you spent more than 45 days with him.

MS. ANDERSON: [Laughs.] Eventually. He was just an old friend. I had been engaged while I was in college, and my plans for my future were very wrapped up with the person I was engaged to. And when he was killed during the war, my whole future kind of changed a great deal. I had to refigure what I was going to do with myself. And one of my professors had recommended me to get a fellowship at NYU with the Sloan Foundation. Out of the blue, I got an invitation from the Sloan Foundation to have all my tuition paid for and have a part-time job at New York University, and that seemed like a good idea, so I did that.

MS. GOLD: That's pretty amazing. But I guess – I mean, it seems amazing for a woman at that time, but I guess you're saying that all the people in the universities were women at that time.

MS. ANDERSON: Not really. There were quite a good number of males at university when I was there. In fact, probably a very good number. Maybe they were older. Maybe some of them were already back. I don't know all the reasons.

MS. GOLD: So you elected to go into this field. I mean, what did you know when you started helping Edgar out?

MS. ANDERSON: I knew just about nothing. He could teach me the first thing to do to help him. It might be how to sand or might be how to use a drill press. And those are fairly easy things to do. I was just a helper. Eventually I started doing things on the lathe, and he taught me what he knew, and then I learned how to do things beyond what he knew. And I started with ordinary tools, and eventually over the years he made me very special tools, let me do the things I wanted to do. And we just advanced one step at a time.

It seemed as though I could do the finishing better than he could, so I started doing finishing. In those days that was spraying lacquer. And one of the interesting parts of being a female doing it is that our standard spray equipment was made for men. And we got in touch with the DeVilbuss Company and said, "Look, I can't really operate this big spray gun very well; what else have you got?" And they went and found some kind of much lighter-weight thing was made not for production but for some other use. It turned out that was fine for my hand.

So I became the finisher. And since I was doing that, I then became a person who learned about finishes, who could research whatever it was we needed to know to get on to the next step in what we needed to learn. We were both exploring, in a way, I think. He started with a lot more knowledge of what he was doing, but I'm a quick study and we worked things out together. But I wasn't attempting to design furniture; I was attempting to be helpful in making whatever it was he wanted to do.

MS. GOLD: So, how did you get into designing furniture?

MS. ANDERSON: I think just because, if you look and if you think about it, pretty soon you have your own ideas of something that could be different. I probably just gradually worked into that. Also, I'd say, "I don't like what you just did; I think you should do it this way," or "I think I would like to figure out what we should do for this client." And the two of us would work it out.

MS. GOLD: And I guess I could ask you together, but I wonder how the dynamic mix of that worked; I mean how difficult it is to say, "No, I don't like that."

MS. ANDERSON: That's easy.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] And is it easy to change it in a way that --

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, I think we have a lot of discussions of why what I want to do is much better, and I have a great deal of difficulty convincing him sometimes that, no, you must not put that piece there; no, you must do it this way. And I don't always win.

MS. GOLD: Do you have a sense of how often you win?

MS. ANDERSON: No.

MS. GOLD: Or how often your designs get to be the ones that are built?

MS. ANDERSON: No. I don't really know. In the little work, a lot of it is mine totally and he didn't work on a lot of the little work. And that means jewelry and little turnings.

MS. GOLD: The plates and bowls.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, but it got into a whole lot wider range with those kinds of objects. And then we used to do some, like, hard wall-hanging pieces that were kind of like wooden paintings, and those would probably be one or the other of us would decide what we wanted to do on that. But if it were something like a chair or a table, we would probably have some pretty good arguments about what we wanted to do.

MS. GOLD: So arguments are not a problem in this household.

MS. ANDERSON: No. It has to be that way.

MS. GOLD: Now, here you are, you're a young couple and you decide to launch a business together that no one even conceives of as a business. Tell me about doing that.

MS. ANDERSON: I don't think we ever thought in terms of this is strange or there's something weird about what we're doing. I think we just took it one step at a time. Actually, the first jobs were not necessarily very creative jobs. We refinished some work. We repaired some work. We did a whole lot of things that earned us some money and also taught us a lot of lessons. By repairing Duncan Phyfe tables, we learned a lot of reasons why, when we designed a pedestal table, we would join the base in a different manner. And the problems that happened to some of the antiques were very instructive along the way.

But we knew that wasn't what we wanted to do. People don't come to unknown people to design them furniture, but things just fell in our lap. When one person came and wanted a – a composer wanted a special table that he couldn't go out and buy, we could design him a table and put our limited use together, or limited skills, I guess, and our knowledge of where to get lumber. And then pretty soon we got people who wanted coffee tables that didn't cost very much. And early exhibits with groups, with New Jersey Designer Craftsmen, opened up a whole additional way of having work seen and seeing other people's work and developing some kind of following for what we were doing, that and early publicity.

Early publicity was extremely valuable to us. It isn't like now. In those days, there weren't many woodworkers. And when the *New York Times* wrote about us, a feature article, on a Saturday, I think it was, the phone started ringing shortly after we saw the paper, and it hardly stopped for a weekend, and then the letters started. So you could pick up an awful lot of interested people with good publicity in those days. Now we get publicity, and maybe one person will think to tell us, "Oh, I saw that article." But that's the end of it now.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] Well, you're not an unknown now.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, but also I think a young person wouldn't find it that easy. There are just that many more people doing what we're doing, and it's not that unique now.

MS. GOLD: So you didn't feel like you were going off into thin air; you felt kind of rooted and just you were doing what you wanted to be doing?

MS. ANDERSON: I think we never expected that we couldn't do what we had set out to do.

We also knew we wanted to build ourselves a house. And I guess we always thought we could earn enough money to make a living, and we had not much expectations, not many needs beyond very minimal ones. We never considered lavish living anything that we wanted to aim for. So we've never made a great amount of money.

MS. GOLD: But you've built a wonderful house, in addition to all your furniture. And you did the heavy machinery?

MS. ANDERSON: I drove the bulldozer.

MS. GOLD: Yeah?

MS. ANDERSON: We bought a little wide-track bulldozer, thinking it would be the easiest way to move all the dirt and rocks around we had to move. And since it was easier to drive that than to use a pick and all kinds of tools to get the rocks out of the ground, which had to be done in order to keep the machine running, I was the one that drove the machine and my husband was the one that picked out the rocks. I kind of thought that was pretty neat. I thought that was a good way to learn to be a good driver, too. I practically got hung up many times going down the hill.

MS. GOLD: I bet. And the stones that you picked up became stones for your house?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. We saved stones and I had them in different piles, and I would go to my little piles to find what I next needed when I started building the walls. Actually, my husband started doing the stonework, and I took a look at it and said, "Uh-huh, that's not the way to do stonework. I can't stand that." So I just started doing

it. I was better at it than he was. And we had some sculptor friends who came along and said, "Hey, you don't know what you're doing." So they brought me some tools. We had a lot of friends who pitched in and were helpful along the way.

MS. GOLD: And whose idea was it to build it without 90-degree angles?

MS. ANDERSON: [Laughs.] We were both very impressed by Frank Lloyd Wright, and of all the architecture we've ever seen, his is the work that we respond to the most. We lived in Chicago -- well, in fact, we lived in the Robie House, the famous Robie House that he designed. The University of Chicago owned it, and when we went to Chicago, I checked in with the university, thinking I might want to either study or work with them, and the dean thought maybe he'd like to have me come. And the Robie House was empty, and we didn't have a place to live, and he said, "Why don't you move in until the students come back." So we did move in, and it was kind of interesting.

And then we moved to Oak Park, where Mr. Wright had lived, and we lived around the corner from his own house. And down the street and down almost every street there were other Frank Lloyd Wright houses. So we saw a lot of it and we had great admiration for it. And my husband had already seen Taliesin [Spring Green, Wisconsin], and while we were living in Chicago, we both went out and spent some time at Taliesin. So it was just a great love of our lives and it has continued to be. I'm much more in tune with that kind of living than I am, for instance, with the house we were in this morning. I could admire the architecture, but it's not the way I want to live.

MS. GOLD: What was it like to live in the Robie House?

MS. ANDERSON: Actually, it wasn't particularly interesting. I don't remember how it was furnished, but it had been a dormitory for students, so the space inside didn't seem to register very much. So even though it's an interesting house to have been in, it wasn't wonderful on the inside at that time.

MS. GOLD: And you went to Chicago for Edgar to go to school.

MS. ANDERSON: That's right.

MS. GOLD: Was this when you were still doing economics?

MS. ANDERSON: No. I had left New York University by then, and so I needed a job, and that's when I got a job with a magazine. I enjoyed the people I worked with, but it was not a job that I would have wanted to keep very long.

MS. GOLD: What were the plans that you had originally had for your life?

MS. ANDERSON: I don't know. It was just doing what came next, I think.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] So you're not –

MS. ANDERSON: They told me I would have a hard time in my life because I do everything equally. Every subject I study, I get a good mark in. I don't have any bumps and I don't -- I'm not super at anything; I'm just real good at a whole lot of things. And they said, "You're going to have a lot of trouble knowing what you want to do, because you have no direction, so your life is going to tell you;" where my husband has this very lopsided direction and always has an idea what he wants to do. So I could have done, I think, any one of a number of different things.

MS. GOLD: What about working together? Was that hard to start?

MS. ANDERSON: I don't imagine it was very hard to start. I think that it was fairly easy in the beginning. And as we got very busy, we learned to work with and around each other without even many words. We would know now this task needs doing, and now I can help do that one. For instance, in carving a great big cross, we started with axes, it was so big. And I think he had one and I had one, and we just went about making whatever it was we had to do. And it was good. It was good seeing that the work progressed and we were each a part of it. And I don't think we had developed any of the conflicts of I want to do it this way, he wants to do it that way. I think we were more or less he's the teacher and I'm the pupil.

MS. GOLD: Oh. Still?

MS. ANDERSON: Hmm?

MS. GOLD: Is that still the case?

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, no. [Laughs.] No, no.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: That's the way we started.

MS. GOLD: Was that hard to change?

MS. ANDERSON: No. I think everything has been gradual.

MS. GOLD: So your training as a woodworker came from hands-on training.

MS. ANDERSON: A lot of woodworkers really didn't get woodworking anywhere else. They learned by doing it. A lot of them that are our contemporaries have learned by doing it. Our apprentices -- our last apprentice [Robert Sperber] went on and got major training at RIT [Rochester Institute of Technology] and went to Sweden to study [with James Krenov]. So he went from us to some major woodworking training. And he has come back and actually taught us some techniques that we had no idea existed. So we learned different ways. We learned the way that, practically speaking, we could figure out, but we learned from him there were other ways of doing a lot of things.

MS. GOLD: What about your influences? Can you talk about what brings you to making something?

MS. ANDERSON: The influences, I suppose, early on on what direction of furniture I liked came from shows. They came from a Brooklyn Museum show of Scandinavian furniture which was revolutionary to us. We had never seen a lot of the details that we saw in some of that furniture, and we very much admired it. We went to other shows, and probably they were somewhat interesting, but that one I remember especially. I suppose we were influenced by books and magazines.

MS. GOLD: What about the environment? Does that have --

MS. ANDERSON: The nature world?

MS. GOLD: Yeah.

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, that's extremely important. We think we probably couldn't live anywhere except in the woods, with doors that come right outside of the rooms we're in so we can kind of ooze outdoors whenever we want to. We designed the shop with double opening doors that would open it all up. Originally we did that, we really opened it up, but we discovered the bugs were getting into our wood and we had to stop doing it.

MS. GOLD: Oh. I guess you couldn't put little cedar sachets on everything. [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: [Laughs.] I think they're too pervasive. And the ones that we got into our wood are really bad, so you don't want them getting into your good woods.

MS. GOLD: What about artists and craftspeople?

MS. ANDERSON: We started with the New Jersey Designer Craftspeople. We and about four or five other couples formed the organization. Our next-door neighbors are -- or were -- craft teachers, and they and a lot of their friends who had gone to school at one of the Newark design schools got together and decided that they would form an organization, and they invited us to join them. They were mostly jewelers and ceramists. There was one other woodworker. And that's how we all started. They were mostly part-timers. The other woodworker was full-time, but the other ones were mostly part-time and they were mostly teachers.

And we all were very enthusiastic about the fact that we were breaking tradition. We were going to do modern things, and we were going to teach people the way of breaking with all their cruddy old antique stuff. So we formed an organization, spent a lot of time arguing on what to call ourselves, and what we were in the business for.

The important thing was that we set up an exhibit every year and turned the other guy's shop into an exhibit space, and we all brought our works and we all had a chance to see them against each other's and how they worked with each other, and influenced each other, probably, and had good relationships with all of the beginning designer craftsmen.

And then that one expanded from the New Jersey Designer Craftsmen to the Newark Museum, which set up a show for our group and, I guess, other people too. And that was a selling show. And we all broadened our -- what we made for that show. We discovered we could sell more furniture there, maybe a little bit higher priced products. And they were very encouraging. They didn't charge us anything. They let us show our things and they

didn't take money for it. So they were very good in sponsoring the craftspeople of New Jersey. So that was maybe the second step.

After that came the New York museum show. I see beginning in '53 and I see -- in '57 we were exhibiting in New York.

MS. GOLD: So you just kept going. One led to another to another to another.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. Yeah. There were others in between. The Montclair Art Museum had some considerable shows of our work, and there were library shows, Newark and Orange. In fact, we designed a lot of furniture for a couple libraries. But by 1957, we were exhibiting in New York at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts.

MS. GOLD: I just wanted to ask you: your public-school administrator father who wanted you to go into some academic career, what did he have to say when you said, "Well, I'm quitting my job and we" --

MS. ANDERSON: I don't think he ever expressed any real disappointment.

MS. GOLD: Really?

MS. ANDERSON: I think he wanted me to do what made me happy. And he liked my husband.

I think my mother-in-law and father-in-law were fairly disappointed in us. I think my father-in-law very much wanted my husband to be a professional engineer, and if not, at least an architect, but I think mostly an engineer; and if we were going to make furniture, we should be making antique furniture. They had no use for the kind of things we were doing. In fact, probably what we were doing had a lot -- a lot of the reason was we weren't going to make what they were living with, either. I think all of us thought we were in a new era and we were going to design something that broke from what our parents had.

MS. GOLD: That's so surprising because it's -- did they come here?

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, sure. We spent a lot of time with each other. My father helped us build. He would come for a day, drive up from the shore and work as hard as we were. As he was getting older, he would contribute whatever he could contribute.

MS. GOLD: Can you talk about that sort of post-war time, where things were changing so much and you were trying to, you know, design a new world, essentially? You were creating the world that --

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. I don't know that we thought of it in terms of the war. I think we thought of it as we were starting our education. There was this whole modern period coming along. And we were aware that there was something like the Bauhaus, which had happened 10 years after we were born, and we were reading a lot of the books that came out of that time. And we were steeped in the idea that there was a modern idiom that was coming along.

And there were a lot of choices to make, whether we thought the modern idiom was making plastic furniture or making plywood furniture. So we also gradually, I guess, maybe started to realize we wanted to work in solid wood and eventually got to know that there were other people out there who wanted to do the same thing. We got to know George Nakashima and his work. Eventually we got to know Wharton Esherick, who we felt even more relationship to. And as you know, we've collected a certain amount of the early laminated furniture because we liked having pieces that were an interesting development of contemporary design, even though that's not the way we wanted to work, in that kind of veneered kind of work.

MS. GOLD: So you didn't feel -- did you feel part of the movement?

MS. ANDERSON: Yes and no. We knew we didn't want to make the suave, sophisticated, plastic-type furniture. In fact, when the Museum of Contemporary Crafts was being born, we got to know the first curator and the first person who was going to be hired before him, and they had a great deal of difficulty figuring out what it was they should be sponsoring, whether people had any right to be making furniture out of solid wood with traditional joinery. And some people who were considered to be a director there thought there was no business, that we all should be working for industrial design and designing pieces which would then be mass-produced; that there was no reason for anything else.

Early on, the museum changed their direction, and Tom Tibbs came in as director and we got to know him. And he put us in some of the first shows and we helped to advise them on some of the things they were doing in the museum. We went through our library and gave them a list of all of our design books and our art books, and they used that, among other things, when they set up their library.

MS. GOLD: Have you -- and maybe this is a better question to ask the two of you -- but have you ever been

approached to do industrial design?

MS. ANDERSON: One or two of our pieces that we exhibited in New York, one of the major companies wanted to buy it and mass -- and produce it, not mass, but on a limited basis. And we worked with them for a while, and they just took us. They just took our design and changed it to what they wanted, and we got nothing from them. So that was a bad experience.

When we went to Italy, we were met by some great designers and they took us around to all the factories, and we got to see the processes, where all the [inaudible] Italian furniture, and admired it. And they wanted to know if we would design something for them. And we didn't see how the two of us ever could meet, but it was a little intriguing for a little bit.

We were fascinated by the processes they used to build furniture. They'd have like a whole ball field of a factory, and it would be absolutely clean, and maybe two or three people would be there. The machines would be feeding each other and feeding themselves, and they would be highly programmed. And it was amazing to watch. That didn't go anywhere, but it was an interesting education.

MS. GOLD: Now aren't you seen as part of, like, the launching of this new craft movement?

MS. ANDERSON: We were apparently one of the earlier-on people. There are three or four others who preceded us, at least, but we were among the early ones. And for a long time, we didn't know the other ones were out there. Not for a long time, but for several years we didn't know these other people were out there. And it was probably just because of the fact that publicity was happening and that we all would eventually get written about that we learned about each other. And then when we all exhibited -- when a lot of us exhibited in the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, we learned who all was out there.

MS. GOLD: And was it important to create that community?

MS. ANDERSON: Well, we didn't really become part of the community. We just learned that there were people out there and they were doing this and they were doing that and they were doing the other thing, and maybe one out of the bunch we exhibited with, maybe two, became people we saw from time to time and who had work in some of our clients' houses and who we would recommend when we didn't want to do a job. But we didn't really develop any close relationship with most of those people.

MS. GOLD: So when you designed, like, that piano bench or other pieces, what are you basing that design on? Where are you coming from when you design things?

MS. ANDERSON: I think it probably started with either a dining table or an altar. It might have started with an altar, when I wanted a gentle curve on the bottom side of the top to repeat the gentle curves that we were using in a cross or we were using in a pulpit, and I liked the way that was working out, so we used it in several church designs. And I liked that enough so that we did several dining tables with that line and several serving tables with that line. And they've been variations on that theme. I worked with it a lot.

MS. GOLD: And it's the curve and the almost wing-like look, flying kind of --

MS. ANDERSON: Well, yeah, the piano bench does that more than an altar does, because the altar has a straight top, where, for instance, that little stool that's outside there, that has --

MS. GOLD: Oh, yeah.

MS. ANDERSON: That's a fold-up stool we did down in Honduras. And that has some of that line too.

MS. GOLD: Now, at this time you were one of a handful of people, but you were the only woman doing this.

MS. ANDERSON: Yes. I think in the furniture show in New York, there was another couple where there was a female, I believe. I'm not sure if she was doing the wood or the ceramic or something else that was part of the wood. But the book that was recently written in conjunction with the female designers, 1900 to 2000 [*Women Designers in the USA, 1900-2000: Diversity and Difference*, ed. Pat Kirkham, New Haven: Yale, 2001], says that I was preceded by one person. I didn't know the one person, but I don't know that. They did a lot of research, so maybe that's true.

MS. GOLD: Did you feel odd or out -- you know, sort of alone?

MS. ANDERSON: [Laughs.] Never. Never.

MS. GOLD: Never?

MS. ANDERSON: Never. I always thought that you just have to show you know what you're doing, and it doesn't really matter much whether you're a male or a female or a dog or whatever you are. It was very much true in Honduras. They didn't hire me to go to Honduras, because they'd had bad experience with hiring husbands and wives. They wanted me to go, but they said they could only pay my way there and my travel within the country.

So I got down there and discovered there was no reason why a woman couldn't work in all of these places. One of the first women we got to be friends with was the woman who ran the bakery because her husband had died and she took it over and ran it. And then I worked with a woman who ran an advertising agency. She was doing that because her husband was a U.S. service person who left when her children were young. So they all had to go to work, and it was fairly normal.

And I think the U.S. had a kind of antiquated idea of what existed in that country, but women were not a problem. It was not a problem that a woman was working. I think in the woodworking shop, we each had to prove, when we worked with the various shops, we each had to prove that we knew what we were doing for them to really want to do what it was we wanted them to do. We each had to show that we had certain skills that we could perform some of the tasks that we were trying to teach them to do.

MS. GOLD: I guess I'll talk some more about Honduras when we talk together.

MS. ANDERSON: In the United States there hasn't been a problem. Our letterhead says "Joyce and Edgar Anderson." That's given my husband some trouble when he has to tell some company what the name of our company is, in the old days. "What on earth is Joyce and Edgar Anderson?" But other than that -- I ordered the lumber and I convinced them I knew what I was doing. And I'd go in the lumber yard and convince them I know what I'm looking for.

MS. GOLD: But there is some convincing that you have to do right off.

MS. ANDERSON: It's not always because I'm a female. Maybe often my husband might have to do just as much convincing.

MS. GOLD: Ah, yeah.

So, how did you learn so much about wood, different woods?

MS. ANDERSON: I guess just loving wood. Reading books and looking and handling, and developing a relationship with Monteath, which was one of the major importers of woods, and going to their warehouse and looking at all their wood and handling their wood.

MS. GOLD: And doing the cutting down of the wood?

MS. ANDERSON: Cutting down? I don't do much of that. Originally, when we first were working, I would be the other person on the two-person saw, and I don't handle the chain saw anymore. Though I tried the chain saw mill, it wasn't very good for me to do, so I didn't really do much of that.

MS. GOLD: This is changing the subject. When you spoke to Liza Kirwin of the Smithsonian, you said you thought you should be interviewed separately as well as together.

[Audio break. Tape change.]

MS. ANDERSON: You mean why did I do that?

MS. GOLD: Yes.

MS. ANDERSON: I didn't want to be interrupting my husband. I thought it was better that he tell whatever he wanted to say. And I would have a hard time, saying, "No, it wasn't that way," or "No, it really was this." And I would have that difficulty, I think, so I thought, well, it's best that he just tell it his way.

MS. GOLD: And you tell it your way.

MS. ANDERSON: And I tell it my way.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: I don't know how the two of us can work together without correcting each other all the time.

MS. GOLD: Do you not correct each other all the time?

MS. ANDERSON: Well, I don't know that we would want to do it. I would think we would have a hard time knowing when we should and when we shouldn't. I mean, if he's telling you that we designed that table for so-and-so after such-and-such, if I don't agree with him, I will say, "No, no, we designed that for so-and-so after this other thing." Okay, he doesn't have a memory for that one and I do. It's not a problem, but I think it doesn't make for a very good interview.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] So you did most of the heavy machinery moving around here, and you did most of the stonework?

MS. ANDERSON: You mean the bulldozing?

MS. GOLD: In building the house, yeah.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, I did the bulldozing and I did -- yeah, most all the stone -- yeah, really all the stone walls. I started cutting by hand.

MS. GOLD: You cut the stones?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. They weren't rectangular. [Laughs.] These are all kinds of stones that grow out here. And a lot of them are kind of disintegrating granite, so it's a little tricky to cut them because you start cutting in one place and they'll just fall apart. So I had to learn to know what the stones were about. I love stones. I mean, I'd look at a stone and I know -- if I see a stone down there, I'll know it five years from now, that that stone will always be here. They all tell me, "I want to be here," "I want to be there." I really love working stone.

So eventually, after the difficulty of hand chiseling, we got an air hammer and I cut them with an air hammer, which probably has something to do with making my hand have more problems, because of the vibrating, a lot of vibrating motion. And I guess, except for the thinner stones which made the floor downstairs, that the guys would cut with the diamond saw, so I was out of the stonecutting business once we got into that. But I did cut the floor out here, the heavier ones, and I did those with the air hammer, I imagine.

MS. GOLD: And all the placement of the stones in the --

MS. ANDERSON: In the walls. Partially that was a compromise. I wanted to do them one way, my husband another. And I figured he designed the building, he has the right to say. So I tried to do it the way I thought he wanted it, and I didn't want to do them that way, and I've always been sorry I didn't do them my way.

MS. GOLD: Oh, dear, another one of those --

MS. ANDERSON: Yes.

MS. GOLD: How did you want to have it done?

MS. ANDERSON: I didn't want them to be square; I wanted to take them just as they came and fit them in however they fit in, and build it. That's my kind of design world. I love moving things around, like the mosaics. I like that kind of look.

MS. GOLD: You certainly have a sense of gesture, I guess, is what I would say, from the swoop of the mosaic and -- that's just on cement? [Referring to the mosaic wall in the bathroom.]

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah.

MS. GOLD: And your --

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. There's a difference in our design. I'm the one who wants the curves and the rhythm, I guess, of pieces. But I like to work that way, too. It's important to me that my body feels a rhythm when I'm cutting on the lathe or whatever the work I'm doing. I like doing spoke shaves because I feel it's almost like dance.

MS. GOLD: You like doing -- what was that?

MS. ANDERSON: The spoke shave, the tool that you -- or draw knife that you pull and create long, sweeping motions. I like using the kind of tools that let you work with a rhythm.

MS. GOLD: Does that lead you to doing the lathe -- the turning work? Is that more rhythmic?

MS. ANDERSON: It's sort of like that. That's more controlled by the action of the spinning, but you can take it in different directions after you've spun.

MS. GOLD: So the spinning itself is not rhythmic, really. And what is it that attracts you to the lathe?

MS. ANDERSON: A way of earning money, I think.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: A way of knowing I could turn out a certain amount of work and actually know how much it was going to cost, and really making a lot more per unit than we ever made doing our furniture.

MS. GOLD: You mean the bowls and the --

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, and the plates and platters, vessels, covered vessels. I made all kinds of stuff, from egg cups to -- little picks, little handles for things, a lot of candle holders. Whatever you could make that would be round, I used to make. I made tops. And it was more, you know, fun to create something new, something that was different, and to make it out of a wood that was fun to work with.

MS. GOLD: But, I mean, you must have made -- it looked like you had dozens of plates.

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, yeah. I made a lot of plates. Platters.

MS. GOLD: Is there enough variety in the wood that you enjoy doing it, or is it --

MS. ANDERSON: I could do it for a certain number of hours and then it's just boring to me. I enjoyed the platters more because I mostly selected really superior pieces of wood, really wonderful one-of-a-kind pieces of wood, and that's more fun. The other ones are just kind of like filling orders, et cetera, but finding different woods once in a while.

MS. GOLD: What about jewelry? What kind of jewelry did you make?

MS. ANDERSON: We made rings, and that was a lot of fun.

MS. GOLD: Wooden?

MS. ANDERSON: Wooden rings, yeah. And I made pendants, necklaces. We did a little bit of metal, but mostly wood. And mirrors that were surrounded in a wooden frame. I have quite a few hands, made quite a lot of hands, necklaces.

MS. GOLD: Oh.

MS. ANDERSON: It was fun. And I loved the rings, but my hands can't wear rings. Can't wear them anymore.

MS. GOLD: So you made hands kind of -- any relationship to the clock?

MS. ANDERSON: They were my hands. [The pendants were my hands but the hall clock was Edgar’s hand and arm.]

MS. GOLD: And how would you make them?

MS. ANDERSON: Cut them on a band saw.

MS. GOLD: I mean, did you have to do a cast of your hand?

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, no, I just do them -- I do it free-hand. I look at my hand and do it. [Laughs.] I'm quite different from my husband. As you see, these are my notes.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] I know. I know. It's very interesting. So, how does that work together?

MS. ANDERSON: I think it's very good. I think it would be pretty difficult if we were both the same. I think we annoy each other like mad, but --

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: He wants to know where all my notes are. What have I been doing? Why didn't I have any notes?

MS. GOLD: And you say, "Yes, I have notes." But you're comfortable with your -- your memories of --

MS. ANDERSON: I just think spontaneity is more desirable. And I know I'll forget a lot of things, but I don't think it

would be better if I had done it another way.

MS. GOLD: Do you have favorite pieces that you have made that you designed that you want to talk about?

MS. ANDERSON: That I designed, I like -- the round table is both of our favorites. That's mostly my husband's design, modified by me. I like it for what it achieved technically and what it achieved aesthetically. And it's been a very satisfactory piece.

MS. GOLD: Is that a one-of-a-kind piece?

MS. ANDERSON: No, we've done quite a few of them. We had to jig up with a lot of equipment to make that, but once we did it, we intended to make quite a lot of them. And it's all filmed, too. The whole process is filmed. So we did some workshops, or my husband did some workshops on making that table, I guess making other tables also. We made a certain number, and we never made the number that we had orders for. We stopped.

MS. GOLD: Oh.

MS. ANDERSON: We always wanted one. We never made one for ourselves.

It's hard to say what my favorites are. I like insignificant pieces. I really like -- the things I don't want to change, mostly, would be like the piano bench. There's very little I want to change with that.

MS. GOLD: Very little? What would you change?

MS. ANDERSON: The width of the boards that make up the top. I wanted to make them wider, and we didn't, for practical reasons, but I would like to have made it the other way.

MS. GOLD: You mean with wider --

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. I would like to have made it out of one wide piece.

MS. GOLD: Ah. And "practical reasons" meaning?

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, just the process of making it, and keeping it from cracking -- [inaudible] -- it made better sense to make it that way.

The same thing with the Grottas' dining room table [Lou and Sandy Grotta, clients]; I did not like the way the base was made. I liked the top, but I don't like the way the base was made out of a lot of separate pieces of wood. I would have made it out of many less pieces. We made a different version of that table for someone else, with different legs. And the Grottas' leg structure is the one I prefer.

I like some of the wall-hanging pieces, the dining room, like the dining room server. They are just things I don't particularly think I want to change. Almost everything we've made isn't as perfect as it could be.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] Oh, God. It must so hard to live with that.

MS. ANDERSON: That's why I can't live with much of our furniture. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Now, are these your pieces?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, both of these chairs. We designed them originally, I think, for a library. We did them by the dozen for a public library, these ones with the arms, but not that back, a back more like this, but with the one arm, as reading chairs in the library. And I think we had a shelf underneath so they could put their newspapers or whatever. And so they were a good way to keep busy for a while. And then we did them for a doctor's office for pregnant ladies. In both of these cases, we had to figure out how many left-handed people are there compared to right-handed people.

MS. GOLD: Oh. How many are there?

MS. ANDERSON: I think it's like one in 10, but I don't know that I remember that correctly.

MS. GOLD: It seems shocking that a library would have the funds to be able to order --

MS. ANDERSON: It would be a particular librarian. We worked with two libraries. And it would be a librarian who knew about our work, I guess. We did a children's room in one library.

MS. GOLD: Oh, really?

MS. ANDERSON: We did the big desk, and we did reading benches, and we did little sitting benches with removable cushions so that when they had a big group, they could take the cushions off and seat twice as many people. I think they really stuck their neck out. Nobody had solid wood birch furniture in libraries, but that's what we did.

MS. GOLD: Amazing. And it's amazing that they could afford it.

MS. ANDERSON: Well, I think we were pretty cheap in those days. I don't imagine that we were too much above whatever they were paying.

MS. GOLD: What they would pay for --

MS. ANDERSON: Maybe. I don't know. You do things awful cheaply when you're starting. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: I know.

Now, I've understood that chairs are among the hardest. At least that's what --

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, a lot of people think so. And we have never had a really successful chair. We've done a couple of others. We designed them in Honduras. Somehow we've never really had one that was really good. Our forte really has been tables. We've done a lot of different solutions to tables. We've been challenged by tables. So we spent more of our time with them than we have with chairs.

And then with all the sculptural stuff, the less functional stuff, I guess we had our fun that way. There's one out in the shop which you have to see, which is beyond what we --

MS. GOLD: Is that a sculptural piece?

MS. ANDERSON: It's another *Lady*, yeah, different lady.

MS. GOLD: Good. I'll look forward to seeing that. The *Ladies*, are those the result of a commission?

MS. ANDERSON: The one in the shop -- the first *Lady* you saw is a story my husband probably wants to tell. It was done for a book.

MS. GOLD: Okay.

MS. ANDERSON: The *Lady* that's in the shop was done because we had made models of a few pieces we thought we'd like to make someday. And a Texas oil man came, somebody had sent him, and he saw the model and he decided he wanted one. This is an unbelievable story. "I will go buy whatever kind of apartment she should live in." And so he called up and said, "I'm going to buy an apartment on the Rue de la Seine and a house or a villa down on Cote D'Azure, so what should I buy? What kind of space do you want?" It was ridiculous.

And he would come here all the time. He'd fly from Texas and he'd keep a limo in the driveway with a lawyer and a limo driver, and he wouldn't want to leave. He'd stay and stay and stay. When we went to Martha's Vineyard, he wanted to come to Martha's Vineyard. He wanted to follow us around.

So, okay, we get nearly ready to ship it off and we get in touch with his office and say, "We're getting ready; how should it be defined, as a sculpture? What do you want to call it to get it past Customs in the best way?" And they say, "Oh, didn't they tell you? He went bankrupt."

MS. GOLD: Oh, my God!

MS. ANDERSON: So that was the first major piece of ours that we have had to sit on.

MS. GOLD: Oh, my.

MS. ANDERSON: We had a deposit, a nice deposit, and his legal staff or somebody said, "Now you can sell it and get back all our -- both of our monies." So that's the last we communicated.

MS. GOLD: Both of our monies.

MS. ANDERSON: Mm-hmm.

MS. GOLD: Now, how did you start to do the free-form tops -- or not free-form, the trunk-form table tops?

MS. ANDERSON: Which one?

MS. GOLD: The table tops that are formed -- that are --

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, the free-edged.

MS. GOLD: Free-edged, yeah.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. I think we admired very much Nakashima's furniture, and he built largely with flitch-cut lumber, and we liked it, too. But over the years, I think we wanted more control over our designs. We didn't really want our furniture to be big nature statements; we preferred to design a piece and control the feeling of it. It just suited us more. So that we have done less and less of them, and the ones we have done are mostly like a top on a cabinet. In fact, we did one a couple years ago, another one fairly like the one over in the Grottas'. That was a hanging one with a wonderful free-edged, free shape on the top. We love them, but it doesn't seem to be the major way we want to design our furniture.

MS. GOLD: What about the carpenter ants?

MS. ANDERSON: This is something we discovered in the lumber that was sitting out here. The first use we made out of it, I think, was mirrors. We figured, okay, there are some great big cavities here and there are some little ones, and let's put a mirror behind it and let the mirror show through the little cavities and then have enough to look at yourself in. And we turned them into wall-hanging mirrors with shelves and did quite a few of them. And we just built them into things and occasionally we find a good use for them. In fact, we just encouraged the ants. Downstairs we have some fairly new work in ash. Our ash was sitting out in the woods and we decided, okay, we're going to let the carpenters get into it. So we put it directly in contact with the ground, let them sit there for quite a few years until we got what we wanted in the lumber.

MS. GOLD: Do you take a look at them every so often?

MS. ANDERSON: We had to go through the whole pile to find ones that were good enough to use. We used the best ones, and I think the rest of them are probably going to be firewood.

MS. GOLD: So you have your collaborators. [They laugh.]

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, those hard workers who keep working night and day, I guess.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] That's great.

And the functionality of your work, is that important to you?

MS. ANDERSON: That's important to me, yes.

MS. GOLD: I mean, obviously all your work is functional. Do you ever think of going into nonfunctional?

MS. ANDERSON: I don't personally want to make nonfunctional furniture. If I want to do a nonfunctional piece, it will be a sculptural piece that doesn't mean furniture. But I want only to do functional furniture.

MS. GOLD: When you see a piece of wood furniture, what is it that attracts you? And what do you look at first off? Do you look at the design? Do you look at the wood? The grain?

MS. ANDERSON: If I were to look at the chair you're sitting in, I would definitely be looking at the design. And I admired it so much in the first show in New York that I ordered one from that show, and he had already sold it to Mrs. Webb, so he made a second one. And it was just because I thought he'd really solved the problem of how to make a good big chair. And I thought it was beautiful.

MS. GOLD: Because of the -- I mean, what is the --

MS. ANDERSON: Just the overall of the way he shaped the arms, and the relationships of the parts.

MS. GOLD: This is a Sam Maloof chair.

MS. ANDERSON: Hmm?

MS. GOLD: I'm just saying it for the people, for the tape.

MS. ANDERSON: Sam Maloof, yeah. I very much admire it. It depends on what the piece is. A lot of the Nakashima furniture that our clients own I admire very much for the wood that he put into it. I think it depends on the particular designer which one I would be most impressed by, the joints or the wood or overall.

MS. GOLD: And when you think of your own work, what part of it gets you most interested? Do you just lunge for

the design? Or is it the detail? Are there parts that interest you more than other parts?

MS. ANDERSON: I think it all comes along together. I think when you conceive a piece, you're thinking in terms of, okay, what kind of joints do we want to put in this piece, and what kind of wood do we think we want? It's all of a part, I think.

MS. GOLD: For your work, the joints are often a highlighted part of your work.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. It's traditional joinery, and we just expose more of the joints than some furniture people do, and we use the joinery as a way of making them slightly more decorative, or interesting, whatever you want to call it. But it's mostly just by the way we expose the particular joint.

MS. GOLD: But you very, very seldom have decorative elements in your work; I mean, decorative additions to your work. It's the joints.

MS. ANDERSON: You mean what else could be in it?

MS. GOLD: That would be decorative for you in your work.

MS. ANDERSON: I presume it would be mostly the choice of woods. Neither one of us like applied decorations of any sort, so we're not likely to do that.

MS. GOLD: And yet you do do jewelry, which is an applied decoration to the human body.

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, yeah. That's different, though.

MS. GOLD: I know that the environment -- actually, let me start over and ask this question. You talk about the feeling that you get from using wood from your own land, which means that you have to cut it and weather it, right?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, it has to be dry.

MS. GOLD: And then using the wood. You know, cutting it and sanding it. What is that meaning for you?

MS. ANDERSON: It’s just a nice concept, I think, that the wood came from here and we've used it to make a piece of furniture. We like being good stewards of this land, and we have a Woodland Management Plan for it.

[Audio break. Tape change.]

MS. GOLD: This is Donna Gold interviewing Joyce Anderson on the morning of September 18, 2002, in her home. And we're on the second day of talking.

I thought we would begin by talking about the music stand that you showed me that is in the -- or the dictionary stand.

MS. ANDERSON: Okay.

MS. GOLD: And it's in what show now?

MS. ANDERSON: It was in a show last year, in “Women Designers 2000,” or it was 1900 to 2000, I think. [“Women Designers in the USA 1900-2000: Diversity and Difference,” Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, November 15, 2000-April 8, 2001.]

MS. GOLD: And that show was at?

MS. ANDERSON: It was at Bard Graduate Center in New York. But it was started by the same group, the Yale Art Center people.

MS. GOLD: So when you made that, was that something that somebody asked you to make?

MS. ANDERSON: Yes. That was made for a client for whom we were doing a lot of other furniture. We had done a desk for them. And then the dictionary stand was to sit beside the desk, so it was made of the same wood as the desk and kind of complemented the desk for them.

MS. GOLD: Okay. One of the questions I was going to ask was, how do you choose the wood? But maybe you could talk about how you chose the wood, because I'm curious how you choose wood for different pieces.

MS. ANDERSON: It was a very formal house. It was a very large and formal house in Greenwich, Connecticut, and

we thought it called for more formal kind of designs in everything we did. And because the rooms were so large, we worked in several different woods in the room. At that point, because we liked them and they did, too, they were all dark-colored except for the fact that we were working a little bit in white holly. So it was all rosewood, ebony and walnut, with some white holly as a contrast to the dark color.

MS. GOLD: So when you work with a client, do they usually invite you in? Do you go to their house?

MS. ANDERSON: Yes. When we do a lot of furniture, we always meet the people, and we usually become good friends.

MS. GOLD: That's nice.

MS. ANDERSON: Because we spend a lot of time with them. The people in Greenwich [Kay and Mike Langan] had bought a very large house, didn't like any furniture they ever saw, so they furnished a little closed-in porch on the first floor and they did not furnish the living room or the dining room, and they were considered very odd-ball people.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] Oh, God.

MS. ANDERSON: But they lived with it that way for, I think, several years, until they came to the Contemporary Craft Museum furniture show, saw our work and saw Sam Maloof's work, and decided that we were the people who should do their furniture. So we started in and we worked for them for many, many years. We worked through child number one, two, three. I don't know, we still went back for parties on child seven, I think. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Oh, seven children?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah.

MS. GOLD: I hope they got a furnished house by then. [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: We would put the important things in, in the living room, and then we did the dining room, so they were pretty well furnished. They recently moved out. The children had all grown up and left home, and they just moved out to something else, and they've been after us to come up and see where all our furniture is. We were trying to get back some of our furniture because some of our apprentices want to own some of it. We thought we were going to get some of it back, but they have figured out every piece is staying in the family.

MS. GOLD: So this is a house that actually didn't have furniture, that you were asked to go in and design?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah.

MS. GOLD: But you decided that it -- how did you -- it wasn't necessarily a formal house before you --

MS. ANDERSON: I've forgotten what style you would call it -- Norman, maybe -- but it was a very formal-designed house and it was a very large house.

MS. GOLD: So you made a dining table for them?

MS. ANDERSON: Mm-hmm, dining table and a very large chest in the dining room, and a serving table with a mosaic top in the dining room. And an awful lot of tables and desks and different kinds of tables, radio, speakers.

MS. GOLD: How did you decide on the dining table?

MS. ANDERSON: A big room large enough to hold one big table, a big family. That was one of the first places, I think, we used the curved underside like in the Grottas' dining table. It has a fairly similar top but different kind of legs.

MS. GOLD: And when you are working with a family like that over and over again, are you going out all the time to look and see how the furniture works there?

MS. ANDERSON: Well, we were delivering our own furniture in those days, so we would take it up, and very frequently they'd have a party whenever we'd be coming, and we'd stay overnight. And we would spend some time. So we've eaten on our table a great many times, sat around our coffee table. So we were very comfortable with the people and with the space.

MS. GOLD: When you do that, do you then think, "Oh, I wish it were this way or wish it were that way"? Do you make modifications when you sit around your coffee table or dining table?

MS. ANDERSON: Actually, I think we all thought we had done the right thing for that house.

MS. GOLD: That's great!

MS. ANDERSON: I think we liked our solutions. It was all probably more formal and more rectilinear than a lot of our work after that. We also did his office, and we did quite a different kind of desk for him in his office. We did these kind of chairs. He's a doctor, and we did some chairs for his office. So we worked for them for a good many years.

MS. GOLD: Do you think that there's a Joyce and Edgar Anderson style?

MS. ANDERSON: Yes, I think so. I think most people could recognize our furniture among other people's.

MS. GOLD: How would you define the style?

MS. ANDERSON: Traditional joinery, very careful selection of woods, conservative. I'm conservative. Together we're conservative. By himself, my husband is kind of way-out, so I don't know how you would define his more sculptural pieces. Gee, I don't know -- [laughs] -- how you would -- what it is?

MS. GOLD: Well, you wouldn't -- I don't know that you would call your work conservative except that it was in a style of modernism, right? I mean, you wouldn't --

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, not traditional from that point of view, but it is conservative modern. I mean, it's whatever you want to call it, contemporary, probably even call it modern. But there is a certain desire for warmth that we've always had that's sent us in the direction of using interesting pieces of wood and pieces with some special kind of grain in them very frequently. Often we have a sense of humor in our pieces, which is not always to be expected in our field.

MS. GOLD: Can you talk about that?

MS. ANDERSON: It kind of turns up all over the place. The fact that we think it's fun when there's a bullet in a piece of wood and, therefore, when we build a piece of furniture, we'll very deliberately include a piece with a bullet. Well, maybe that's more a sense of history than a sense of humor.

The coffee table that has the kind of three-part design where there's a kind of a landscape in the middle that has a little ball that rolls down it. I think we did that because the whole table looked too serious, and so we made a little pathway for a ball to go down and ring a bell.

MS. GOLD: Oh, the marble rings a bell?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah.

MS. GOLD: I didn't realize that it rang a bell.

MS. ANDERSON: That kind of thing. And in the more fanciful pieces that my husband has done, the kind of contrasts and heroes and warfare or whatever he's contrasted in his pieces is really kind of humorous, to put Leonardo's bow firing a missile, or put a radar receiver in with a dragon, and all that kind of stuff. It seems to me that's a kind of fun thing.

MS. GOLD: Right. I know that castle nightstand --

MS. ANDERSON: The *Knight Table*, yeah.

MS. GOLD: The *Knight Table* is very different from the traditional chair or table that you also make. But then again, the --

MS. ANDERSON: The use of wood might tie it together.

MS. GOLD: Yes, and your use of the -- I don't even know how to call it, the natural, barked edge.

MS. ANDERSON: The natural edge. Yeah, flitch cut.

MS. GOLD: What is it called?

MS. ANDERSON: Flitch cut.

MS. GOLD: Flitch cut?

MS. ANDERSON: It's the way the log is cut across. Instead of being, you know, the edges cut off and all squared off, it's cut the full width of the tree trunk, so that you have both edges and you get the shape that the tree had.

MS. GOLD: That, and also your encouragement of the carpenter ants. [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: Yes.

MS. GOLD: I think that there's a sense of -- and I don't even know how to --

MS. ANDERSON: That's a kind of feeling for what the natural world has done, I think; that, and the fact that we also use spalted wood, which a lot of turners use.

MS. GOLD: You use what?

MS. ANDERSON: Spalted wood, which is a decaying process of wood, but if you catch it soon enough, it doesn't mean that the piece is going to fall apart; it just means it's softer, has started a decay process. But it produces its own kind of very interesting grain, and we've used that in quite a few of our pieces.

MS. GOLD: And when you work, do you see yourself as moving from the wood first, the wood to the design?

MS. ANDERSON: It comes both ways. I think sometimes you have a design and then you go look for the right wood for the kind of design or for the kind of place you want to put it. Other times, you look at a wonderful piece of wood and you say, "I'm going to make a" -- whatever it is -- "out of it." And because of that, we have about twenty-five-hundred pieces of wood out in the barn which are supposed to be made into one, two, three, four, five, six, seven different kinds of things. It's always, "Oh, we can't use that yet; that's too beautiful." "We have to have exactly the right place to do that one."

MS. GOLD: Right. And do you have a lot of that wood catalogued in your mind?

MS. ANDERSON: We have it pretty much on card files. Actually, I have drawn a lot of them on the cards so that I know where to go find particular pieces. It's a lot of work.

MS. GOLD: That's amazing, to draw it.

Now, did you have any artistic inclination when you were young?

MS. ANDERSON: No, none at all. Not much desire to draw or paint. I did sew and I did create things when I sewed. I would create costumes for myself. That kind of thing I would do, but drawing and painting I had no interest in. When I have to sketch a piece, I just look at whatever is in my mind or whatever is out there and sketch it on the back of an envelope. My designs are usually that kind of thing.

MS. GOLD: On the back of an envelope?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs] And yet clearly, you have such a strong sense of design. And I actually wanted you to talk a little bit about the mosaic that's in your bathroom because it's so -- again, it's gestural and it's so spare.

MS. ANDERSON: I did that just the way I do a lot of things. I did it without any preplanning. I just went in with all my little pieces of glass tesserae and thought, well, I want to relate this way to the fish that's on the wall where the water comes out, so I want this kind of swoop around the fish, and then I want this one to go up and counter-balance that one, and just did it spontaneously.

MS. GOLD: On wet cement?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah.

MS. GOLD: So you couldn't go back.

MS. ANDERSON: Well, yeah, I could knock them out. I think I glued them. I think I used some kind of mastic to put them on. I don't think I released and set them in. I think I then went back and mortared the joints. But I think I worked with mastic, put on a very thin cement surface. We've had people who wanted me to come and do them in their house, and I just can't do it. I couldn't go and camp out in somebody else's house and play the way I can play in my own house. So I have done other mosaics, but they were in pieces of furniture.

I got started because we had a good friend who was a mosaicist, a very famous mosaicist. We became good friends and saw a lot of each other, and we decided to collaborate on furniture. So we designed several pieces

that he did the mosaics in.

MS. GOLD: And who is this?

MS. ANDERSON: Hugh Wiley. He was doing mosaics we dearly loved at that time. He, I think, switched to mostly sculpture after that. And he did quite a few tables and serving tables, serving wall mounts with us. And I thought that was kind of fun, so I decided to learn how to do mosaics, too, and then I did our bathroom wall.

MS. GOLD: In the [mosaic] work you've made on end tables, do you have the same sort of free flow in them?

MS. ANDERSON: Not as much, no. Because of where they were and what they did, they were much less so, although one of our clients who had one, a very large coffee table with a mosaic that Hugh Wiley had done, I thought was beautiful. They didn't want to live with the colors anymore, so they came to me a couple years ago and said, "Will you take it out and do a new one? We want to use the table, but we don't want to live with blue anymore." It broke my heart to take it out, but I figured, okay, otherwise they're just going to throw the table away." So we took his out and I did a nice free one in that.

MS. GOLD: Do you want to talk about some of your other collaborations?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. I think the first ones were probably when we were starting the New Jersey Designer Craftsmen. And there was a ceramicist making nice tile, and we thought it would be a good idea to insert some of his tiles in our coffee tables to give people a surface that could take heat or moisture more than our wood could. So we designed some tables and worked out the details of how you could insert a piece of non-moving material into our moving wood surface. We found the right kind of mastics and the way to mount that would let it work. And we did quite a few of them. They were quite popular.

And one of the other people we worked with was a fabric person who became a good friend. And when we were doing church work, we designed a pulpit which was to have a tapestry on its front, and we had her do a tapestry. So we worked together with what the symbolism and colors should be.

MS. GOLD: Who was that?

MS. ANDERSON: That was Zelda Strecker. [We also collaborated with our friends Rowena and Robert MacPhail. They designed and made silver symbols which we mounted on the altar ebony panels.]

MS. GOLD: And when you talk about the symbolism, is this generated by the church itself or by what you were thinking of?

MS. ANDERSON: It's usually agreed upon. We work with the church people and discuss what makes sense with them and their religion.

MS. GOLD: I'm going to get off the subject for just a moment. When you work for churches or religious institutions, do you work differently? I mean, do you have a sense that you're doing something -- is it a different process than working with a client?

MS. ANDERSON: The pieces themselves, I think, are quite related to our furniture. I think we think of them in very similar terms in design, so I think there would be a close relationship.

Working with the church people is quite different because you often have to work with a committee. We've been fortunate that some of ours were working with strong Episcopal churches where it wasn't too much of a committee, but when it is a committee and we find that they have no concept of what we're trying to do, we very frequently do models. And we've discovered -- it's unfair, but they're so cute that they almost always think they're wonderful. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] Oh, dear.

MS. ANDERSON: You can sell all kinds of things by way of a model. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] How small are the models? Are they like those chairs that we saw yesterday?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. If you go out in the shop, you'll see models all around the place. They're mostly from the churches, but we've done models when, for one reason or another, there were too many people in on the decision-making.

MS. GOLD: That's good advice, isn't it, for --

MS. ANDERSON: There are some great stories. Like, one church, when we designed a cross and there were some

very traditional-minded people, and some guy got very furious, some guy on the committee: "I don't want THAT kind of stuff; I want the cross that Christ was crucified on." Oh, boy, did he give me a good one. I said, "Okay, I don't know what it was; you tell me what it was, and that's fine. What was it, a couple pieces of, like, 2 x 4s, or a couple tree trunks? Were they tied together? Were they nailed together? What was it?" He says, "Oh, well, it has the fleur de lis out on the edges." I said, "Fleur de lis?" We had him. He was saying, "I want a Gothic cross." [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: We got our cross.

MS. GOLD: That's really good.

Do you see yourself as -- are you and Edgar religious people?

MS. ANDERSON: I grew up having to go to church. And it never took. I have a great, you know, feeling of relation to the natural world, but I don't have any belief in or anything beyond that. I don't have any idea what's out there before or after my life.

MS. GOLD: I think that seems to be the case for most people who work with natural materials; I mean, that's your spiritual world.

MS. ANDERSON: Actually, we did a workshop for a Unitarian -- are they okay? [Referring to tape recorder.]

MS. GOLD: Yeah. This is just my backup --

I'm sorry. You were saying you did a workshop?

MS. ANDERSON: We did a workshop for a Unitarian conference, and I was fortunate in they assigned me the religious space, alternative space. And I was kind of stimulated. I went to the Metropolitan and got a lot of slides. I made slides of everything from Aztec to Mayan to ancient European to all kinds of places where people thought the spirits occupy. And I tried to give them as wide an idea as I could find of what a religious space could be. And we talked about gardens and things like that. And I was very happy with the final bit, where I think one group from New York got quite excited and decided that they would probably do a contemplating garden up on the rooftop. And I thought that was kind of nice to have those ideas come out of our examination.

MS. GOLD: Oh, wonderful. Yeah.

Now, I didn't want to get totally off the subject. We were talking about your collaborations. And you worked with a fabric designer and with --

MS. ANDERSON: Let me think. We probably worked with a lot of other people. Our woodworking friend, Emil Milan, who was a bowl carver and a very good sculptor, we have worked with him from time to time, and worked with him to help -- had him work with us to help develop a new sculptural leg design or something like that. [He also carved collection plates for one of our church jobs.]

Actually, we worked with him -- we both worked together in Honduras, so together we developed a lot of designs for bowls to be made in Honduras. We were using bird heads and we were trying to bring in a lot of the natural world from down there into the carvings so they weren't just carving the Mayan kind of thing. We had a real exciting program down there.

MS. GOLD: Am I correct in thinking that we'll talk about that together?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, we'll talk about that somewhere else.

MS. GOLD: Okay. I wanted to also ask you about the -- most of your work seems to come from commissions. Am I correct in that?

MS. ANDERSON: Yes. Most of our work is from commissions. But people can't come to us and say, "I want this piece of furniture to look like this." They come and say, "I want a coffee table" or "I want a dining table." We say, "What kind of space?" and "What kind of woods do you like?" and we work it out that way. But they have probably already come to us having seen enough of our designs so that what we present to them isn't too unexpected. But some of them have very special requirements that we work with. There was one client we liked. They wanted something that could be a coffee table and jump up and be a dining table. It was kind of a Rube Goldberg kind of design, we figured. I mean, you would have to come up with something kind of weird, which we did.

MS. GOLD: Did it work?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, it worked. It wasn't one of our good pieces -- best pieces of furniture, but we solved the problem.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] Is the problem-solving part of your work?

MS. ANDERSON: Yes, it's very interesting to us. We've often come up with the idea that that's what a creative person is, a person who sees a problem and goes about trying to find a solution.

MS. GOLD: Is that one of your favorite parts of the challenge?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, I suppose so. I also very much enjoy the personal relationships with our clients. The problems they present us with are challenging, both personal and space-wise.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] I think it was you who suggested that I read the Sam Maloof book. And I see so many parallels, one of them being the personal connection with the clients.

MS. ANDERSON: Yes.

MS. GOLD: And I was wondering why you wanted me to read it, what you see as the connection with Sam Maloof?

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, there are so many parallels in his life and ours. He was far more productive and, you know, was concentrated on a different -- more chairs and that kind of thing, but our feeling of design is quite close. And a lot of things are parallel, the contacts we've had, the places we've worked. We've shared clients. We've paralleled his life quite a bit.

MS. GOLD: And were you working at pretty much the same time period?

MS. ANDERSON: Yes. He's a little older. He started a little before we did.

MS. GOLD: One of the other aspects of the book that interested me was the sense that he really started a movement or was part of a movement that -- or did what he did, and then realized that this is a movement.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah.

MS. GOLD: And do you have that sense too?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. I think we all at that period started our individual thing, or a lot of us did, and were surprised to discover that, "Oh, my goodness, there are a few more of them out there."

MS. GOLD: Doing what you're doing is more than creating furniture, I think. You're also saying that what's important is that a human being designs -- is the hand, the connection with the hand, the connection with the intent and the time, and seems very much of a contrast to the modern world to spend so much time on creating an object, a functional object.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. I suppose it's a very anti-social way of living your life. It's kind of not the way it's done. But I guess one of the things that attracted me to the field, and maybe a lot of the other ones, is the fact that we weren't joining the world that our parents or a lot of our peers were joining, and we weren't going to go in an office and work, and we weren't going to be tied into commuting somewhere. There were a lot of things we elected not to do. And then we picked up all the benefits of an awful lot of really rewarding relationships with people.

And the other thing that we like to do, really, is not just do one piece of furniture; we like to work for most of a house. We like to create a total room or a total interior design. So churches were nice in that respect. We would do everything that went up in the chancel area, and you would have control over what the whole area would look like.

MS. GOLD: I want to go back and go over a couple of things that you just said. One of them is that this is anti-social.

MS. ANDERSON: I guess anti-social is the wrong word, but just against the kind of thing that most kids are brought up -- or were brought up at that time to think they were going to do. We found that the apprentices who came to us were in the same boat. They were electing not to do what their fathers were doing. Their fathers were very successful in the professional world, but were driven by that world and were not well-treated by that world. And these guys decided they were going to do something very different.

MS. GOLD: Yes. I mean, I understand that as sort of growing up in the '60s, that, sort of, protest against the --

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, this was different. It was before that.

MS. GOLD: It was before that. Were you influenced by books that you were reading?

MS. ANDERSON: I don't know. Some of it is really tradition. We thought we were fighting tradition, but in actuality, we were saying we're going to live a lot of the way your grandfather lived or your great-grandfather lived or your uncle lives. In a sense, we had those examples but didn't realize. We thought we were rebelling, but those were the ones that apparently we were going to follow. And I think over the years, we realized we really were very much in tune with the traditional furniture world. Although we don't want to design it to look like a lot of the period pieces, we still want the kind of warmth and the kind of detailing that that used, as against what a lot of modern furniture started to do.

MS. GOLD: So in a sense, you're in line with the much more ornate kinds of cabinetry that was created in the 19th century, except that yours isn't in -- because that had the work of the hand, but yours is not ornate.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. For instance, [Gustav] Stickley, who we didn't really know about when we started, we got to know his work well when we became friends with the people who lived in the Stickley house. And we got to see his best work there, and it was a lot more interesting than the work that we normally saw presented as Stickley, which just seemed like, "Oh, that's a mission chair and that's not very interesting." But he did do some others that were much more complicated. And we realized that, you know, we had a relationship to what that man was doing. In fact, I just recently read a book on his work and learned a lot more about him than we knew at that time.

MS. GOLD: You also spoke recently just about designing a total room.

MS. ANDERSON: Mm-hm.

MS. GOLD: How did you develop into that kind of relationship with clients? Actually, I guess maybe we should begin by saying how did you originally be able to have clients that were interested in your work? How did you begin to find clients?

MS. ANDERSON: They mostly came to us from either publicity or shows. And then one client would often lead to another. We did work for some architects, whom we knew as friends, and through them we met other architects, and through them we worked for churches that they designed. Or we would work for one church and the architect of that church would do another church and ask us if we'd come and work in his other church. So one thing leads to another once you get going. We got going really by the publicity and museum shows.

MS. GOLD: But not connected with galleries.

MS. ANDERSON: No. Never galleries. No.

MS. GOLD: So in a sense, you see yourself as part of a movement, although --

MS. ANDERSON: Of the fringes, I think.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: I think we're on the fringe of it.

MS. GOLD: What do you mean, on the fringes?

MS. ANDERSON: Most of all the other woodwork -- the other woodworkers we exhibit with are much better known than we. They're written about much more than we are. We are the quiet ones that are kind of on the edge somewhere.

MS. GOLD: So, even you're a little bit rebelling from --

MS. ANDERSON: We're not rebelling; it's just the way it is.

MS. GOLD: It's just the way you are.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah.

MS. GOLD: Okay.

MS. ANDERSON: We haven't pursued a lot of things that would have gotten us more in the public eye. And we

haven't been very productive.

MS. GOLD: You haven't?

MS. ANDERSON: No. We've been heterogeneous. We've done so many different things. We really never thought of ourselves totally as furniture makers. We thought of ourselves as kind of designers. And we worked in other materials when we wanted to work with them. We worked with cast metal for quite a while. We worked with plastic for quite a while, learning techniques. And we've gotten waylaid, spent a lot of time learning how to do other things.

MS. GOLD: You worked in plastic?

MS. ANDERSON: Well, we learned to work in plastic when we decided to do a cross in plastic rather than stained glass. So we had to figure out some kind of technique, and had to go back to Rahm and Haas and start with molding powders and figure out how to make the material we wanted to make, discovered the colors we could have are only the colors that had been worked out for commerce. We had to make that work somehow into the kind of designs we wanted to do. We learned a lot. And then, having learned that much, we decided, okay, let's see what else we can do with it, turning it into a more three-dimensional form. After we played for a while, we stopped.

MS. GOLD: Was it satisfying to work with plastic?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, very satisfying to find a way of making it look interesting and unexpected, to put bubbles in it to make it look less sanitary, make it create other kinds of texture.

MS. GOLD: So if you were to talk about, like, a guiding principle or what motivates you?

MS. ANDERSON: I guess I would go back to saying I never wanted to be bored. So I guess I would say it's stimulating to have some new project to think about and to work out.

MS. GOLD: And if all else fails, there's always your home. [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, we'll go back and build some more.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] Which doesn't have right angles, or not too many of them.

MS. ANDERSON: Of course, I'd never do it like this anymore. I'd do a very different house if I were to start now.

MS. GOLD: You would?

MS. ANDERSON: Yes. I mean, the space use has changed so much. And the way we live now is so different from the way we lived before. We once had big dinner parties. We once needed a different kind of space to eat in. We turned that whole room into eating. We saw this room for a very different use than the way we use it now. We have computers now. There's no good place to put them. We need separate space more than we needed it then. I'd build my house and my husband's house and I'd join them together with a dining room, I think.

MS. GOLD: Oh! [Laughs.] That's like Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, I think that would be the way I would definitely do a house now.

MS. GOLD: Isn't that interesting. I guess there's no way to predict that as you --

MS. ANDERSON: No. It's like when we designed our first television cabinet. It was, you know, five times bigger than the one we designed it for, because we know they were going to get bigger. So we designed it, what, for an eight or nine-inch one; we did it so it could hold a 12- or 14-inch one or something like that. No matter how far you think you're thinking ahead, you haven't anywhere nearly judged what's going to happen. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Oh, how interesting. Yes. Have you been asked to design computer tables?

MS. ANDERSON: No, we haven't gotten into that, and I doubt if we would. I think we'd tell people that it's a changing world; you better go out and get something you can throw away in five years. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Right, because when somebody is working with you, you really are designing for --

MS. ANDERSON: We're hoping, if we put all the work in and select really good wood, that it's going to last for a while, at least.

MS. GOLD: A while. And here these people are deciding to keep their furniture and pass it down to their kids.

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, yeah. It's all designated for which child gets which. In fact, the Grottas are doing something like that, too. I think they're donating some of those pieces to museums. I don't really know for sure. But they will see that something good happens with them.

One of our clients that we talked about before, that was splitting up his good contemporary house and splitting with his wife, had really one of my favorite dining tables. We thought about buying it back, but it was too big for our house. There was no way we could put it in here. And he said, "If you will turn yourself into some kind of foundation or something, I'll give it to you and you can have it as a piece to go into a museum or whatever you want to do, if you want to do that." But there wasn't any way we could do that, so we lost that piece.

MS. GOLD: So you don't have the sense of turning -- because you're donating this house and land.

MS. ANDERSON: We're donating the property and our house. And the people that seem most likely to get it would preserve furniture if we wanted to make that part of the deal. They would prefer not to have our furniture, have to live in our house and someone who lived here having to take care of it and maintain it like a museum, but if we wanted to, they would make it a separate part of the whole deal. We could possibly do it in the shop if we cleared out everything else. I don't know if it's worth that effort, but it's a possibility.

MS. GOLD: I sort of asked you this before, but maybe I'll just try -- ask again. How would you define your place within the American craft movement, if there is such a thing as the American craft movement?

MS. ANDERSON: We have been interested in and, I think, fairly -- somewhat influential in the beginnings of things. I think we were influential in the beginning of New Jersey Designer Craftsmen and the New Jersey craft world. And then when the American Craft Council started, we were active at that point. And when Peters Valley was forming, we were active at that point. I think we're interested in the forming of all of these organizations, and once they got going and become kind of, like, committee meetings, we lose interest. That's the part of it that interests us, is the forming of it.

MS. GOLD: And the forming of it in order to do what? In each case, do you want to --?

MS. ANDERSON: To help establish the direction that the group might want to go. To have a voice in that kind of thing.

MS. GOLD: But what was the intention, let's say, what was your vision in the American Craft Council?

MS. ANDERSON: At the time, I think they did what we hoped they would do. They were going to show people like us in all of the fields who were kind of doing work that was compatible, probably, with each other. And like all such ongoing museums, they had to change with the times, so they have changed with the times and gone on to what's being done today. I think we are old fogeys. We have kind of stuck with what we liked back in the '50s and kind of taken it slowly a little way from there, but we haven't jumped to what's being done now, so we no longer feel much relationship to what they're doing.

MS. GOLD: Hmm. Is that because you're focused on the functional?

MS. ANDERSON: Partially, yeah. There are other issues where we differ. My husband, especially, differs with the kind of flat approach of furniture as against in the round way of designing. I just am not -- I don't want to live with what I see, for the most part, what's being done, for the most part. So, okay, I'll stay with where I started, I guess.

MS. GOLD: So when you think about designing your work, designing work, you always think about whether you would want to live with it.

MS. ANDERSON: I can take it a little ways away from me and I can think in terms of this person's life being this much different from mine, but for the most part, I wouldn't want to build anything that I didn't like.

MS. GOLD: Have you ever been asked to?

MS. ANDERSON: I imagine so, yeah.

MS. GOLD: And so do you then actually say, "Well, find somebody else"?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. Usually you just kind of fumble a little bit and they learn they don't really want you anyway. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Do you do work that's self-generated, that's not for commissions?

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, yeah. We've done pieces for shows. We've done pieces because they've been something

we've thought about for a while. Often it's to put it in the next show. I mean, it ends up being put in the next show.

MS. GOLD: So can you talk about a piece that was mostly, you know, designed by you that you didn't --

MS. ANDERSON: Me personally, or the two of us?

MS. GOLD: You personally, perhaps.

MS. ANDERSON: Hmm. I'll have to think on that.

MS. GOLD: Okay. Or the two of you, then.

[Audio break.]

MS. ANDERSON: No, that's not right. We designed that for a doctor's office [talking about a tall walnut and oak bookcase with two shallow drawers and three hinged free edge doors].

MS. GOLD: Right. That's what I thought. That's what I thought. That's what Edgar told me.

MS. ANDERSON: But we didn't really design it for him; we designed it because we wanted to do it that way. And then I guess we submitted it for the doctor's office.

MS. GOLD: So there are times when you have an idea for something you want to do, and a commission comes up and you say, "Hey, this is it. This is the time we're going to do it."

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. But *The Hand*, *The Lady* -- well, *The Lady* was designed for a book; *The Hand* was designed for a show. It usually takes a show to do a major piece. It probably always takes a show to do a major piece. I don't know if we ever get around to -- other than the little stuff. I do most of the little stuff that usually isn't on commission, all the turnings and serving dishes, whatever you want to call them, the carved ones. They're all just done because we want to do them.

MS. GOLD: Currently you're not doing too much work; is that correct?

MS. ANDERSON: I'm not doing woodwork, that's right.

MS. GOLD: You're not doing woodwork. And that is because of your illness?

MS. ANDERSON: I stopped turning maybe in the '90s because I was coughing my fool head off. And I had started coughing years before that, and it got so bad that I decided I couldn't live with sawdust anymore. It actually started a long time before that. When we were first living in the shop, in a totally woodworking environment, I started to cough. And it got so bad, the doctor told me to move out, but we didn't know what it was. They told me I had an allergy to wood. I had some of the best doctors. And I had a New York allergist who made -- I was kind of a research project, and they made special injections for me, using a mixture of our woods, and I got injected with walnut. I mean, obviously, I reacted to walnut dust, which everybody else does, but it didn't seem to me as if you should call that an allergy, but that's what they called it. So I lived on allergy treatments, which were mostly antihistamine, and pretty soon I wasn't coughing like -- breaking my ribs anymore.

MS. GOLD: You had been breaking your ribs, literally?

MS. ANDERSON: Yes. I also discovered I couldn't walk up a hill anymore. So I finally had all kinds of major testing, and it turned out that I had what's called chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which means my lung passageways are clogged and I do not have a very good way of breathing. So I have a lot of medicines which keep my passageways open enough so I can at least walk down the driveway.

A lot of it could have happened because we worked with a lot of sawdust, and it could have been made worse by the finishing materials we used and by the chemicals we used. In those days, nobody seemed to have much idea of how dangerous all these things were for us, so we didn't keep our shop well-ventilated, we didn't wear masks for a while. After a while, we did. Then we got a very good dust-collecting system. But it was too late; I'd already done the damage.

MS. GOLD: Hmm. Yeah. When you say you're not doing turning, any woodworking anymore, what are you --

MS. ANDERSON: I've gotten involved in woodworking to the extent that I've designed pieces that we have other people make. And I probably will keep doing that.

MS. GOLD: So are those designs different than the designs that you have yourself made?

MS. ANDERSON: No. We have found two young woodworkers who are very good woodworkers. One of them has no aspiration to being a designer. He's interested in traditional work. But he is a very good woodworker. So we work with him very closely and tell him exactly what we want. And we lay out the wood ourselves in exactly the way it's to be joined, so we control the use of the wood. But he does things well, sometimes better than we could. [Laughs.] And there's another one who is a designer, and it's a little more difficult working with him because he would like to add his little bit to his designs. And he's trying hard to be good to us and do it exactly the way we want, but he's farther away and we can't keep as close track of our pieces when he makes them.

MS. GOLD: Has your inspiration for work changed over the years?

MS. ANDERSON: I think maybe. I don't know if I call it inspiration. What I've learned about wood and what I've learned about what I like has changed what I want to do. But whether I have any new inspiration, I don't know.

MS. GOLD: So, as you know more about the wood and about what can be done with it, your design changes based on the knowledge that you have.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, probably.

MS. GOLD: Do you find yourself influenced by changes in the -- by current designers or changes in the furniture movement?

MS. ANDERSON: I think I can look at it and say, "Well, I don't want to do that" and "I don't like that." It's been a long time since I've seen a new piece or something that I've said, "Oh, that's wonderful. I'd like to be able to do something like that."

MS. GOLD: Hmm. So you don't feel influenced by --

MS. ANDERSON: I would be if I were still doing turning. I'd be influenced by the current turners. I'm very impressed with the turning work that's being done.

MS. GOLD: Because of what about it?

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, they've taken it so much beyond the earlier turning techniques and they've added so many other ways of doing things.

MS. GOLD: Any particular names?

MS. ANDERSON: I just don't really remember many of the names. We know Bob Stocksdale, and of course his work, we think, is just absolutely wonderful. But he has worked in his own tradition also all of these years. He's not one of the ones that's taken it into all these other different techniques.

MS. GOLD: You're not working now, but over the years, can you talk about how the process of your work changed?

MS. ANDERSON: What do you mean?

MS. GOLD: How your working process changed. I mean, as you got to know more about the craft and more about the wood, did it change how you worked with the wood?

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, I presume so. I presume we brought in different ways of surfacing wood, different uses of our machines. We bought new machines that added other kinds of techniques we could do easily. We've always continued to do some hand work, just because we like doing it, and when you're doing one of a kind, it's often more practical just to start out and do some of the work by hand.

MS. GOLD: I know you use humor in your work a lot. Do you see your work at all as a kind of commentary, political or social?

MS. ANDERSON: I don't think it's very politically -- making a political comment. The pieces that are based on human bodies make some kind of comment. It's been my husband, mostly. They're his kind of pieces. His *Ladies* make a comment. He's often making -- he puts in the first woman balloonist because he wants people to know that it was a woman that did the first -- I don't know what it was, ballooning or whatever. But he'll put those kind of comments in his pieces. So that kind of thing, that he probably does quite a bit of that. But I don't do that kind of thing.

MS. GOLD: I definitely want to talk to you about your partnership, and I don't know -- do you think it's better to talk together about it, or --

MS. ANDERSON: I think you ought to do a little separately, but mostly together.

MS. GOLD: Yeah. What's it like to live and work with the same person?

MS. ANDERSON: It's easier to work than live with the same person; I've decided after all these years. The living's the difficult part.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: We work together quite well. We developed our own skills and preferences for which machines we liked to work and which parts of the work we wanted to do. For the most part, it was complementary rather than contradictory. But over the years, it became more difficult because I became more of an individual woodworker, not just a helper to my husband. So that made a lot more decision-making that had to happen of how you go about it when you disagree with each other. And we solved a lot of it by saying, okay, when we can't agree, we'll submit separate designs, but since we don't like people to play us off against each other, we won't tell them this is his and this is hers; we'll just submit two or three designs and let the client pick out the one they want. It worked for a few years, till we decided each one of us had much more positive ideas and we only wanted our own, so then it became more difficult again.

MS. GOLD: How would you deal with it if your design wasn't chosen?

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, it's fine. We accepted that. But usually we liked each other's design. It's just I wanted to do it this way; he wanted to do it that way. It was okay.

MS. GOLD: Then that meant that that design never got made.

MS. ANDERSON: Frequent. Sometimes, yeah. Sometimes it went into the portfolio and got dragged out some other time.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: There's about 25 beds that haven't been built, waiting for the right person to come along. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Were there times when you really wanted something made and went ahead and made it anyway?

MS. ANDERSON: There are quite a few pieces I want to have made right now, and I will just have to go get my young woodworker and we're just going to have to say, "Okay, this is it. My husband has nothing to do with this one."

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] Tell me how they would -- are they different from the way your husband works?

MS. ANDERSON: It's really just the functional thing that I've had for a long time on coffee tables. I want to have four coffee tables that are essentially 15 inches, like we're using these two. And I want them to have either color or grain or some reason why they would like living either in pairs or singly or quadruply. And I have functional ideas of how they should look. And I've never convinced anybody that they should have them, so I'm just going to have to go do them.

MS. GOLD: Oh, so it's like a modular -- using the modular model.

MS. ANDERSON: A lot of people have done it in a lot of different materials, but I want to do it in wood, so I can move them apart and make them end tables and move them together and make a coffee table.

MS. GOLD: Sounds like a great idea.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. It could be fun. I don't want it to look like a checkerboard. I don't want one wood here and one wood there. I want something that makes the four happy to be together. I haven't yet figured out what that is.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] Okay. I'm going to give your voice a rest.

[Audio break.]

MS. GOLD: I wanted to ask you again a little bit more about your development from a helper to a designer.

MS. ANDERSON: I think possibly I can think of it mostly in terms of our church work because somewhere along the way, I think even in the first church, we had to design a cross and we learned that what that church would

hope the cross to represent was a piece of symbolism. It was a cross from which Christ had risen, so it was kind of an empty cross. And so I had the idea -- I guess maybe we both did -- that we would like to work in white holly, the kind of whitest and, therefore, in a sense the purest of the woods. And I developed an idea of hollowing out the cross to say that this is a really empty cross. And it turned out, by the process of hollowing out the cross arm and the up-and-down arm, you would leave in the center sort of a cross form, and it kind of made an interesting secondary design.

MS. GOLD: This is a hollowed out cross, but how would people see that it was hollowed out?

MS. ANDERSON: It was hollowed out enough so that, with any normal lighting, you would know that that was -- it was really carved. I mean, we really carved it out.

MS. GOLD: Oh, I see.

MS. ANDERSON: It had depth, and you could see that that was carved out. And I think that probably quite a few of the pieces that went into that chapel were things I wanted to design. Finding a simple answer for a simple chapel, where the pulpit kind of grew out of the rail and kind of was fitted into the rail. There were a lot of ideas that were mine that came into that church. And I think that that was true of a lot of our churches after that. It's a subject I was very interested in, and I came up with quite a few of the ideas that went into the symbolic pieces.

MS. GOLD: That's interesting, that your designs came in when the work not only needed to fit in a room, it also needed to carry some symbolism to it. Do you think you're more of a symbolic thinker of the two?

MS. ANDERSON: This is probably a little more challenging, and you're thinking in a lot of other areas to help you develop your forms. You're thinking about what does this mean to this group of people. Then you have to penetrate that. What's the more important symbolism in this space? Which one? What does it mean to you? For instance, an altar; is it a place where people were killed? Is it a place where you celebrate the last supper? Is it a place where you bring sacraments? Exactly what is an altar? Well, let's figure that one out and we'll know what kind of form to give it. Are you going to have to drape it in fabric or are you going to keep it open and let the wood show? There are a lot of things like that that go into your thinking, and therefore, it's kind of an interesting intellectual challenge.

MS. GOLD: When you are thinking in terms of it's going to be draped, then do you want to be designing the drapery, as well?

MS. ANDERSON: I would like to; but I really am trying my best to say, "don't drape it, let the wood have the say of whatever it is you want to say, and let's not do that." But if they have to do it, that part we can't. They have their definite ideas of what their white cloth is going to be, so we have not gotten involved in that. Only when it's a tapestry-type thing would we get involved, when it's not on the altar, when it's on the pulpit or some other place.

MS. GOLD: And you've also designed for synagogues, right?

MS. ANDERSON: We only designed for one temple, yeah.

MS. GOLD: Was it difficult for you to make the leap to another --

MS. ANDERSON: No. We loved it. We loved being able to think about another -- well, an awful lot of the same tradition, actually, the church tradition, came through the Jewish temples. But also we did it for one of our favorite clients who wanted to donate it to the temple. So we started with that one, and therefore we had a good relationship with the people who were running that organization. It was very challenging and just as interesting as the other religious work.

MS. GOLD: What did you build for that?

MS. ANDERSON: A Torah holder.

MS. GOLD: A Torah holder, but not the ark.

MS. ANDERSON: No, a separate piece to hold the Torahs when they were out of the ark.

MS. GOLD: And not where it's read, but just --

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. It was apparently not a traditional piece of furniture. They would normally prop it on a chair. And they decided wouldn't it be nice to have a separate piece to put them on and not have to put them on a chair. I think we wall-mounted it. But it was elaborate, rosewood -- walls. And I think we designed it with some bronze and -- I've forgotten what, might have to look at the picture. But it involved where to put all the symbolic

parts, where to put the little things that had to hang.

MS. GOLD: The pointer and the --

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, and whatever goes on top of them. So we had to have the protuberances or whatever they were that would hold all the different things that normally were associated. It was fun.

MS. GOLD: So it wasn't such a symbolic work that you did.

MS. ANDERSON: Well, yeah, because there wasn't much tradition to uphold, but it was all in the functional need and letting the Torahs be happily held. We did actually bring in some symbology, I think. I've forgotten what they were now. We had some ideas related to something else, but I don't know what. Then they asked us to do an eternal light kind of thing. We were going to work with quartz crystals and let the light come through the quartz. It would have been fun, but we never finished it and figured it out.

MS. GOLD: I thought I also read that you designed some menorahs.

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, yeah, we've done quite a few menorahs. They were for a Jewish show, an exhibit, I think, in the Y, I think, or something like that. The big metal candle holder that's in our room is an offshoot of that. One of them we designed was somewhat like that. We had taken the tradition too far for most of the people. We were not lining them up in a line. We were having the right number of candles and sometimes the right elevation of the candles, but we were creating pieces that were too different. I did one in wood with a whole lot of -- in fact, I turned it -- a whole lot of little cups surrounding another one, I think. And it was really not, I guess, traditional enough for the groups where we did them, where we exhibited them.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] I know there's a certain elevation and relationship between them they're supposed to have.

MS. ANDERSON: We asked a lot of questions. You know, "Can we change this? Can we really make it do this other thing?" Most of the rabbis said, "Oh, yeah, you can do that." But I guess when you want a symbolic piece to represent something that you're used to, you don't necessarily want it to say, "I'm not quite sure what this thing is saying."

MS. GOLD: Hmm. So it is with the symbolic work that you became more involved as a designer.

MS. ANDERSON: I can think of that. I presume it was happening in the other furniture at the same time, but it must have been such a slow change. You know, slow, saying, "I want to change this piece, this design a little bit this way, I don't like it," probably is the way it started. Things like the round table that you saw, the one with the slits in it, my husband designed. Well, we both had the idea for how the top should be made up of unmatching pieces of wood so that they looked like separate spokes in a wheel. He had the very interesting construction details where the base part came into the top and therefore the whole construction was kind of continuous from the base into the top in a very interesting way. And then he put ball feet on the bottom. I thought that was an awfully clumsy-looking termination of that table. So I let him do a first one, and then I said, "We can't do that anymore. We've got to make a more graceful foot." So he worked out a more graceful foot from then on. It had a different foot.

But those kind of changes are probably the way I would have worked, although I was already having an influence on how the top looked. And often I got involved with how the wood pieces were matched. I can see color in wood better than he can, and I can judge what is going to happen when they're put together better than he can.

MS. GOLD: But it never was the case that one of you would go to a client and talk. You would always both go.

MS. ANDERSON: For the most part, both of us do, but not always. And then there are clients that we never meet.

MS. GOLD: Oh, there are?

MS. ANDERSON: Mm-hmm. Last piece we did were people who saw our work in a book and called us up and wanted something fairly similar to what they saw. We talked to them many times and wrote a few times. Never met them. People we worked for in New York City, we often didn't know them at all. Most people around here you get to know just because it's easier to get together.

MS. GOLD: New York, you went to Greenwich to meet these people, but New York City you don't like going to. [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: [Laughs.] I guess with one piece, or casually one piece here and one there in New York that you would do, you just wouldn't get to know the people. But I suppose there have been quite a few of those out there over the years, a few people you meet very, very casually. We had quite a few foreign people when we started to design furniture, early in the time we designed, and we figured that was because it was more normal in the

countries they came from to have pieces designed for them. We would meet them, but that was it. They got their piece and they went to wherever they lived and that was it.

MS. GOLD: Earlier you were talking about your work for special-needs people. That's another design problem-solving kind of thing.

MS. ANDERSON: Yes. Because of our real desire to help a particular person that had polio and couldn't use the upper part of her body much at all, we got very involved with her home in Chatham. It was a formal, traditionally furnished house, and we did things we wouldn't do for other people. We designed to match the kind of things that were in her house, built-in things that were of woods we don't normally use, because they were already being used in the house.

She'd have a special reading table that dropped down very easily in the den. We did one of our one-arm chairs for her and fitted it in a difficult way to give her higher support and a different angle of the back. Though it's not as comfortable for everybody else, it was what she needed to hold her body together. We did special things in the bathroom so she could prop her arms up and use, to the minimal amount she could, a toothbrush or whatever it was. We would even help prop up a toilet seat. Whatever it needed to make her life better and she couldn't find anybody else to do, we would do for her.

But then, to get away from all the help that she needed to live, she and her husband bought a wonderful spot up in northern New Jersey and they built a simple weekend getaway place. And that one they let us furnish with our kind of furniture. So we did quite a bit of furniture. Once again, it had to be tailored for her. We did a couch that we've done for other people, but the angles and the backrest and the side rests were all different. The slope of the seat and the slope of the back were different.

MS. GOLD: Was the whole couch made for her, or was part of it made for her and part of it for her husband?

MS. ANDERSON: Well, anyone could use it, but the angles were such that she could use it but for a lot of other people it wouldn't be as comfortable as other couches might be. But everything she used had to be thought about. And when she came to eat, she had special tools that she could handle enough to kind of pick up a piece of food and put it in her mouth. But everything she did was a challenge. It was fun to help her, which we tried to do.

MS. GOLD: Did you try to get that into more general production for other people?

MS. ANDERSON: If there had been something along the way, I suppose we would have, but we never thought of it that way. We never contacted anyone and never did get into anything else. I suppose some of the other people who have been handicapped have seen what we've done there and maybe they copied some of the ideas. I don't know.

MS. GOLD: And you also did metal fabrication, right?

MS. ANDERSON: Yes.

MS. GOLD: Did you do that?

MS. ANDERSON: I've done some of the ones that were cast. I've done the patterns. Mostly that was church work. And if I wanted to do a candle holder with metal, with bronze. Often, I would make the wooden part and then make a pattern for the bronze part. And I designed a dove for a church that I did the pattern and had it cast. And there are probably -- I worked with the metal-workers when we designed, fabricated church rail parts that had to go to a factory and be made. And I worked with the factory to get the right finish, and stayed in the factory while they were being done. I found that a very interesting experience.

MS. GOLD: Do you know when you're designing that this has to be in wood, this has to be in metal, this has to be in plastic?

MS. ANDERSON: In church work, for the most part, in a good-sized church, the rails are going to be metal, just for the support needed. And I would say that where we've done some that were like a wood frame within which there was some metal, and it didn't have to be metal, we often put in metal for the contrast and the shine of it, I think, for that kind of reason. But most of the church rails are from metal. It's logical to use metal when you have a support problem, when you're supporting a cantilevered pulpit or something like that. It's always an option, but –

[Audio break. Tape change.]

MS. GOLD: We better go back. You were talking about the design of the pulpit.

MS. ANDERSON: There's often a reason, I guess, you would use metal. There are a multiplicity of parts to be made, and it makes more sense to do something that can be cast and reproduced in quantity when there's a lot of use for it. And that makes metal a logical answer. But we've also tried to combine metal with wood in some of our furniture, and there were a couple years when we tried to find some way of doing metal bases for wood tables and metal insert tray-type things in wooden tables. And we never found anything we liked or anybody else liked. They just weren't what we wanted to do. We tried a lot of things.

MS. GOLD: Your dining table is --

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah, that's the first, one of the few that we had to solve a problem, and I think that it's acceptable use of metal and wood. But we haven't found many places to do it where we liked what the result was.

MS. GOLD: So usually the metal is either to hold heat, as in the mosaic, or to hold up the table.

MS. ANDERSON: You mean we tried to combine it in that piece of furniture.

MS. GOLD: Yeah.

MS. ANDERSON: No, I think we did it for a decorative reason.

MS. GOLD: Oh, okay.

MS. ANDERSON: We also were doing, I think, some plant tables for people, and we got into creating, like, metal trays, not just buying them, but making them out of copper, whatever we thought would be an appropriate material. And that probably got us into the idea of, okay, instead of just plants, what else can we use and insert, have some other use for. But the plant tables were the only things that made sense.

MS. GOLD: Did you ever try to use glass? You were using plastic as if it were glass.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. We were trying to say this is not stained glass. We were trying to say we want a continuous surface of color, like a painting, and only have it transparent, mostly translucent, transparent, without all the divisions that would have been necessary for stained glass. If stained glass could have been used in the fashion we wanted, the continuous flow, we would have, but since it can't be used that way, we then developed the plastic technique. But I can't think of anyplace where we used glass. Some of the students have worked in screens that have used glass, and some of them have used etched glass, but that's something we never got into.

MS. GOLD: Did you teach yourself?

MS. ANDERSON: Not much. I've taught at Peters Valley a little bit. I never wanted to teach. I teach the way I'm with you. You come; if you want to make a chair, okay, I'll show you what chairs look like and we'll bring in 15 chairs. Now you know what a chair looks like; now you go do a chair. And after everybody gets stuck somewhere, well, you can have a three-legged chair, but you've got to make sure that there's a method. And I don't say, you know, "I know all this and it's going to go into your head from my head." I say, "You learn and I'll help you learn."

MS. GOLD: Is that how you feel that you learned?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. I have to just do it, and then do it some more, then do it some more. Yeah.

MS. GOLD: Do you think it's a luxury to take that -- I may backtrack and ask the question again, but in a sense, I see your lives as being able to take time. I mean, you chose a certain economy of lifestyle in order to have the luxury of taking the time to learn, taking the time to explore. And maybe "luxury" is the wrong word to use.

MS. ANDERSON: I just think it's part of what my intellectual world is like. That's what I want to do. That's where I want to be at. I want something that challenges me, and I would be bored if I were repeating something over and over. My husband used to say three-legged stools are all I could ever make, that I couldn't stand making four legs alike. And actually, I've made a lot of three-legged stools. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] So you can do three that are fairly similar, or is it that if there are three, they don't have to be alike?

MS. ANDERSON: No, I'm just saying that as a joke, really -- [laughs] -- because I've done chair legs by the dozen, but I got so bored doing them.

MS. GOLD: Ah. In that way, do you -- I don't know if it was you or Edgar yesterday was talking about that you

have so many friends who are scientists. And do you feel that you identify with the scientists in that need to explore and examine?

MS. ANDERSON: Very much so. My husband and one of his physicist friends were part of an examination of what makes creativity. They were brought in to a group of businessmen. A businessman wanted to convince his straight-laced businessmen that they wouldn't know who the Nobel scientist was and who a woodworker was if they weren't told. That there were two very creative people; he was going to let them come in and speak to this group of men; and the men could ask them questions, but nothing that would establish what their business was. And they talked for an evening with the men. Both my husband and his friend more or less said creativity is problem solving, which the businessmen were horrified that that was what they said creativity was. And at the end of the evening, half of them got it wrong which one was which.

MS. GOLD: So it was a toss-up, 50-50.

MS. ANDERSON: Something like that. It was fascinating.

MS. GOLD: It is.

MS. ANDERSON: Our businessman sets up these things once in a while, and they're fascinating. He brought us in when he had a problem designing a new machine. And the problem was, his staff couldn't get together; the engineers or designers or whatever they were couldn't work together. He brought us in to be arbiters, but we were to be the designers brought in. And it was interesting. But we were essentially to solve a problem with his workers, but the way he chose to do it was to bring us in to help them design this piece so they would be working against us instead of against each other, I guess.

MS. GOLD: And did it work?

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah. A lot of these things have worked. He was thinking he was an uncreative businessman, and yet he's come up with all of these kinds of interesting ideas.

MS. GOLD: Well, sometimes business is problem-solving, too.

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, sure. But he doesn't strike you at first as that kind of person.

MS. GOLD: Interesting. Okay.

[Audio break.]

You said that you were working now to get the property ready for somebody else to enjoy or --

MS. ANDERSON: Mm-hm, to write some of the history of it so that the next owner will have that information, and to write the history of the house building. We photographed it all along the way, so we have albums of the whole construction process, what's inside the walls and all of that kind of thing. And I would like to write up an accompanying dialogue to go along with all of that so that the next owners will have the practical information they want and all the other along-the-way interesting things that have been part of the property.

And I'll enjoy that because I like to write. And I spend time occasionally writing up my ideas on something like church design, and I have talked to groups of people who were interested in such things and then went off and toured the churches we've done. And I've always enjoyed writing.

MS. GOLD: Do you see yourself as writing a book about --

MS. ANDERSON: No. No, I haven't found anything to say. I have written quite a few little stories. I've written the whole story of when we brought up three baby raccoons, actually two baby raccoons. We spent almost a year photographing them and keeping them alive, trying to bring up two wild creatures that could go back and live in the wild. It was a wonderful, interesting time. And when we've been away on other projects, I have written back fairly lengthy letters to some people and asked them to keep those, which I could then use as sort of a history of what happened on those jobs. And I have those letters. They've saved them for me. So all along the way, there have been a lot of little chances to write. I've rewritten a thousand things for my husband. We kind of work together on a lot of the things he writes for the township committee and for the local papers. I've been his editor for a long time.

MS. GOLD: Do you think you're going to get into making, like, an artist's book?

MS. ANDERSON: He thinks he wants to do a book, but he couldn't. He can't be that disciplined. And I don't have anything to say.

MS. GOLD: As you're talking about creating the story of this house and this property, I can see you just sort of getting something, this beautiful volume created --

MS. ANDERSON: I don't know what it will be like. We have done some fabulous parties here. We did a big 4th of July party for many, many years, and it involved our friends and their children as their children were growing up. So, for many years it involved whatever would interest the whole family and children. And it was always something everybody could do together. It was not, "Let's sit down, eat and drink"; it was a treasure hunt maybe when all the little kids were running around, and there would be messages which would take them to different parts of the property where they would, I hope, discover something of interest. And the final bit was down in the brook, where there were little boats that were hand-carved, little wooden boats, which our carving friend made for these little kids. And they were so good, the mothers all took them away from the little kids.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.] They're so beautiful, huh?

MS. ANDERSON: But we did a great many plays. This room became the stage. This was an open -- the wall was here, and the other part of the house there, before we lived here and it was just under construction, you could sit out in there and you could look on the stage. So it was fairly like a little theater. One person wrote us a play. We had the Americans and the British on either side. It was a fun play, a lot of work. I got a Larry Rivers "Washington Crossing the Delaware."

You know, in those days there were no photocopiers, so I had to type all these darn things in duplicate, triplicate, quadruplicate, parts for everybody. Nobody saw their parts until they came. And I had to assign them because you couldn't work that out, so I figured out who should be king or queen, who should be what. And we would have kind of minimal costumes, which somebody would have made.

And we had a British play which -- we heard a British play on BBC, and I loved it. It was a story of somebody buys a property in the country and thinks it's going to be wild forever, and everything happens, from an airport to everything else. And so I wrote to the BBC and they said, "Well, we only have one copy, but we'll send it to you, and please send it back when you're done." Only the BBC would do this.

MS. GOLD: Oh. Amazing.

MS. ANDERSON: So we did use the play, and it was wonderful. And I sent it back and I wrote them a letter and told them what we had done with it and how great it was, and they wrote back, and so pretty soon we were writing back and forth to each other. And we did the “Washington Crossing the Delaware,” which is a big spoof kind of thing. And some of the kids were Indians, and one of the fathers made them up. And they discovered they could go in one door and out the other and be a continuous -- Indians which never stopped.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MS. ANDERSON: And we did a sound-and-light thing with somebody who brought some wonderful photographs we projected outdoors. We did a debate on whether Washington's troops should camp out in Jockey Hollow or in the Governor Morris Hotel in Morristown. [Laughs.] I thought that would be stimulating, but people weren't quite up to that one. But they were all ways of having people interact, get to know each other on a different basis. And they were awful good parties.

MS. GOLD: Yeah, God. How many people would be at these things?

MS. ANDERSON: Oh, 35 to 50, something like that.

MS. GOLD: Amazing.

MS. ANDERSON: People would bring some food. We'd provide a lot of food.

MS. GOLD: That's great.

MS. ANDERSON: Yeah.

MS. GOLD: Well, maybe I'll stop there. I think your voice is getting --

MS. ANDERSON: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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